DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 480 596 SO 035 261

AUTHOR	Pearson, Sarah S.; Voke, Heather M.
TITLE	Building an Effective Citizenry: Lessons Learned from Initiatives in Youth Engagement.
INSTITUTION	American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Surdna Foundation, Inc., New York, NY.
ISBN	ISBN-1-887031-80-4
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	39p.
AVAILABLE FROM	American Youth Policy Forum, 1836 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-775-9731; Fax: 202-775-9733; e-mail: aypf@aypf.org; Web site: http://www.aypf.org/.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Citizen Participation; *Citizenship Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Field Trips; Juvenile Courts; Public Policy; Social Studies; Special Needs Students; *Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS	First Amendment; Site Visits

ABSTRACT

In 2002-2003, American Youth Policy Forum conducted a series of forums and field trips focused on issues related to the development of effective citizenry and youth engagement. This publication reports on some of the ideas that were presented and discussed during the course of these activities, and describes some of the work that individuals and groups are currently engaged in to promote the development of effective and engaged citizens. The document contains: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "How Can We Build an Effective a Citizenry? Lessons Learned"; (3) "Preparing for a Successful Adult Life: Voices from Youth with Disabilities"; (4) "Youth VOICES: Scaling Up a Youth Civic Engagement Program"; (5) "Creating Laboratories of Democracy: First Amendment Schools; (6) "Extending Service to All Youth"; (7) "Generation DotNet: A Civic and Political Portrait"; (8) "Engaging Youth in Public Policymaking through Youth Cabinets and Youth Commissions"; (9) "Youth Action for Educational Change"; (10) "The Power of Youth Court to Build an Effective Citizenry"; and (11) "Students Changing the Course of Public Policy". The publication discusses lessons learned from these events and summarizes each forum and field trip in the series. It concludes with recommendations collected from the series for building an effective youth citizenry. (BT)

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Building an Effective Citizenry

Lessons Learned From Initiatives in Youth Engagement

ED 480 596

Sarah S. Pearson
and
Heather M. Voke

SO 035 261

BRIDGING YOUTH POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

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American Youth Policy Forum

– Bridging Policy, Practice and Research

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) is a nonprofit professional development organization based in Washington, DC. Our mission is to bridge policy, practice and research by providing nonpartisan learning opportunities for professionals working on youth policy issues at the national, state and local levels.

Our goal is to enable policymakers and their aides to be more effective in their professional duties and of greater service—to Congress, the Executive Branch, state legislatures, governors and national organizations—in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting our nation's young people. We believe that knowing more about youth issues—both intellectually and experientially—will help these busy professionals to formulate better policies and perform their jobs more effectively. AYPF does not lobby or take positions on pending legislation. Rather, we work to develop better communication, greater understanding and enhanced trust among these professionals, and to create a climate that will result in constructive action for the benefit of the nation's young people and their families and communities.

Each year, AYPF conducts 35 to 45 learning events (forums, discussion groups and field trips) and develops policy reports disseminated nationally. For more information about these activities and other publications, visit our website at www.aypf.org.

Funders

This report was made possible by the generous support of the Surdna Foundation, Inc.

AYPF events and policy reports are made possible by the support of a consortium of philanthropic foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, General Electric Fund, William T. Grant Foundation, George Gund Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Charles S. Mott Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, and others. The views reflected in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.

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Sarah S. Pearson
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Heather M. Voke

Bridging Youth Policy, Practice and Research

American Youth Policy Forum

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Introduction

In 2002-2003, American Youth Policy Forum conducted a series of forums and field trips, each focused on issues related to the development of effective citizenry and youth engagement. Participants in these experiences had the opportunity to learn about the wide variety of work currently taking place to help young people take action in their schools and communities and to become engaged and effective citizens. Researchers presented recent findings about youth civic engagement, and leaders from youth organizations discussed their efforts to engage young people in education reform, service-learning, and community activism. Participants had the opportunity to hear young people from communities across the United States describe their involvement in activities related to community problems and the powerful learning experiences that issued from their participation in these activities. Participants in the forums and field trips also had the opportunity to share their expertise and advice about the types of practices and policies that are needed to support programs that engage young people and develop civic competence. Panel and audience members exchanged lessons learned about effective policies and practices for promoting youth civic e ıgagement.

This publication reports some of the ideas that were presented and discussed during the course of these activities, and describes some of the work that individuals and groups are currently engaged in to promote the development of effective and engaged citizens. It also captures some of the knowledge that was presented by participants and issues some recommendations, based on the wisdom shared by panelists, about characteristics of effective programs and practices for engaging youth and helping them to become effective citizens.

The forums discussed in this publication include the following:

- *What Youth with Disabilities Say is Important for Building a Successful Adult Life*, July 29, 2002. At this forum, youth with disabilities and adults who work with them described the obstacles that inhibit the full participation of youth with disabilities in society.
- *Building on Success: The 'Scaling Up' of the Youth VOICES Project in Philadelphia*, October 4, 2002. At this forum, panelists discussed efforts to take a highly successful youth civic engagement project to a national level.
- *Creating Laboratories of Democracy: The First Amendment Schools Project*, December 9, 2002. This forum described a project that disseminates grants to schools that make a commitment to teaching the meaning of the First Amendment by giving students the opportunity to practice democracy within their schools.
- *Focus on the Future: A New Civic Institution for the New Century*, January 10, 2003. Two leaders in national service imagine the possibilities and benefits of extending the opportunity to participate in service to all of our citizens.
- *Generation DotNet: A Contrast in Civic and Political Behavior*, March 21, 2003. This forum reported on a recent study of the political and civic attitudes and behaviors of youth aged 15-25 conducted by researchers from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at the University of Maryland.
- *How Youth Become Effective Citizens: Models for Engaging Youth in Policy*, March 28, 2003. Recent efforts in Missouri and San Francisco to engage youth and solicit their perspectives in the formation of public policies are described.
- *Youth Action for Educational Change*, May 17, 2002. Panelists described efforts in New York and Philadelphia to engage and organize youth in the process of education reform and redesign.

In addition, two field trips are discussed:

- *The Power of Youth Court: Cultivating a Culture of Community and Citizenship.* February 20-21, 2003. Field trip participants learned about Youth Court, a youth-led crime intervention and prevention program that seeks to positively influence youth by increasing awareness of delinquency issues and by mobilizing community members and youth to take an active role in addressing youth delinquency at an early stage.
- *Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy* in Washington, D.C., April 29, 2003. On this field trip, participants visited a groundbreaking charter school that focuses on public policy and had the opportunity to hear students, teachers, and administrators discuss the powerful impact that the school is having on youth engagement.

Following is a discussion of lessons learned from these events and then summaries of each forum and field trip in the series. The report concludes with recommendations collected from the series for building an effective youth citizenry.

Lessons Learned

How Can We Build an Effective Youth Citizenry?

It is important for adults to recognize that youth engagement initiatives have multiple payoffs. As participants in these forums and field trips show, youth can and do make important contributions to their communities prior to adulthood. Thus, youth engagement initiatives can be a powerful tool for improving communities and meeting the needs of people of all ages who live in those communities. Advocates of youth engagement initiatives often focus on the contribution that such initiatives can make in helping youth acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are associated with effective civic action in adults.

If youth engagement initiatives are to be successful in engaging youth, they must move beyond the token involvement of young people. True engagement requires that youth have genuine and meaningful opportunities to make their voices heard and to have an impact on the problems that concern them. Effective initiatives respect and recognize the value of the experience and knowledge that youth can bring to public problem solving. Adults who work with youth should avoid making generalizations about youth apathy and realize that many youth care deeply about public issues and are interested in becoming involved in addressing society's problems. Just as youth may need training in leadership skills to be effective public problem-solvers, adults who work with youth may need training to learn how to listen to what youth have to say and to respect the experience, knowledge, and perspective youth bring to the table.

Supportive policies and legislation can make service-learning a common experience for all young people and bring existing, successful service programs to scale. Leaders in education and youth development should investigate and support new and creative ways to incorporate service in the lives of all youth.

Adults should also realize that initiatives to involve youth and to promote youth engagement may run up against complex, messy, and difficult problems. Progress will not always be immediate or obvious. Addressing the problems that arise will require hard work, a sustained commitment to working through the problems, and a willingness to listen and learn from others whose experiences may be very different from their own. Developing trusting relationships between young people and adults does not happen overnight; but with sustained engagement and guidance, we can work with youth to build an effective citizenry.

Preparing for a Successful Adult Life: Voices from Youth with Disabilities

At the forum, *What Youth with Disabilities Say is Important for Building a Successful Adult Life*, July 29, 2002, youth with disabilities and adults who work with them described the obstacles that inhibit the full participation of youth with disabilities in society. Panelists included Marissa Johnson, Rebecca Hare, and Tracee L. Garner, National Youth Leadership Network; and Laurie E. Powers, Oregon Institute on Disability and Development/UAP Child Development and Rehabilitation Center.

The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is an organization composed of approximately 300 youth leaders with disabilities, ages 16-24. The group promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness among young leaders representing the diversity of race, ethnicity and disability in the United States; fosters the inclusion of young leaders with disabilities into all aspects of society at national, state and local levels; and communicates about issues important to youth with disabilities and the policies and practices that affect their lives. With support from researchers from the Center on Self-Determination at the Oregon Heath and Science University, 17 members of NYLN's Youth Leadership Council developed and administered a survey to gain an understanding of the needs and issues that concern their peers. Youth Leadership Council members recruited over 200 young people with disabilities to take their survey; survey participants were between the ages of 14 and 16.

The results of the survey reveal what young people with disabilities say are the most critical needs and the most serious disincentives that must be addressed if they are to make the transition to successful adult lives and to be full participants in society. Certain experiences were regarded as very important to youth with disabilities as they strive to build successful adult lives. Included in these experiences were learning how to set goals and be assertive, taking the lead in planning education and future goals in school, becoming involved in community service, and learning about laws that affect them (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Survey participants revealed that there was not much opportunity for them to take the lead in any of those areas. Youth with cognitive disabilities also reported having significantly less opportunity to attend classes and interact with peers who do not have disabilities.

Youth Leadership Council members Rebecca Hare and Tracee Garner argue that youth with disabilities should be supported in their attempts to take control of their own lives and to become their own advocates. They and other Council members believe that to achieve this goal, youth with disabilities need access to information centers that are operated "by us and for us." Youth also need assistance to facilitate the transition to successful adult life; this assistance should include information about the policies that impact people with disabilities and the tools that are needed to advocate effectively for disability issues in public policy.

Youth with disabilities should be supported in their attempts to take control of their own lives and to become their own advocates. They need access to information centers operated by them and for them.

Youth VOICES: Scaling Up a Youth Civic Engagement Program

At the forum, ***Building on Success: The 'Scaling Up' of the Youth VOICES Project in Philadelphia,*** October 4, 2002, panelists discussed efforts to take a highly successful youth civic engagement project to a national level. Panelists included Barbara Ferman, University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia; Michael Sack, Youth Empowerment Services; and Susan Goldberger, Jobs for the Future.

The Youth VOICES project is a university-based, youth civic engagement project serving in- and out-of-school youth in Philadelphia. The project gives youth ages 14-21 who do not attend the university the opportunity to become familiar with the university, its students, professors, and the local environment. Through the program, youth work together to become effective citizens and meaningful members of the university and surrounding community. During a six-week summer academy, groups of students from the program work to identify and define an issue of interest to their peers that concerns their community. The group develops a strategy for addressing the problem, determines timelines, and builds partnerships to address the problem with community-based organizations, businesses, and others. For example, one group of youth surveyed peers, parents, and community members to get a better understanding of what motivates and influences teen decisions regarding sexual activity. Findings from their survey were used to create a booklet aimed at challenging their peers to think critically about peer pressure and media influence. Participants presented the booklet to their peers as part of a series of workshops planned and delivered with help from a community partner. Another group of students worked on a project that explored the interaction of young people with local police. The youth provided a workshop for peers that employed role-playing to highlight the importance of police in the community.

The VOICES project is currently addressing issues associated with going to scale as it attempts to expand from the local to the national level. Barbara Ferman, professor of Political Science from Temple University is leading these efforts, in partnership with Youth Empowerment Services (YES). The partnership is also receiving help from Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national intermediary organization with experience identifying promising programs and helping them go to scale.

As those who have attempted to scale up programs know, successful youth engagement programs that seek replication on a larger scale must move with care or risk failure. Insufficient planning and flexibility can lead to failed policy efforts and frustrated practitioners, policymakers, and youth. Ferman describes the type of issues and questions that the program has had to address as they work to expand it to the national level: How do we adjust the program to accommodate local variation? What core principles should be maintained as core aspects of the program? What type of institutional infrastructure is necessary to house the various programmatic components and organizational partners? Should the expansion be a slow growth process or should expansion progress more rapidly as needed?

Successful youth engagement programs that seek replication must move with care or risk failure

Susan Goldberger, from Jobs for the Future in Boston, Massachusetts, offers the following suggestions for those who are attempting to scale up their program: 1) Standardize the program and make sure it is well-structured to attract others; 2) prepare the program so that it is easy to promote and market; 3) make sure it is financially viable and sustainable; and 4) provide or identify funding that interested parties can plug into. Goldberger reminds that scaling up takes a serious time commitment. Program managers should also take advantage of work that has been done by program participants in the past and build upon it, rather than discarding work that has already been done. Program managers should also consider their ability to maintain a steady commitment to your involvement in the project.

Creating Laboratories of Democracy: First Amendment Schools

The forum *Creating Laboratories of Democracy: The First Amendment Schools Project*, December 9, 2002, allowed panelists to describe a project that disseminates grants to schools that make a commitment to teaching the meaning of the First Amendment by giving students the opportunity to practice democracy within their schools. Panelists included Charles Haynes, First Amendment Center; Sheldon Berman, Hudson Public Schools; Irasema Salcido, Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy; and Michael Wildasin, First Amendment Schools/Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The First Amendment Schools Project seeks to teach students the rights and responsibilities associated with the First Amendment to the U.S Constitution. Sponsored by the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center (FAC) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the Project has selected eleven elementary, middle, and high schools (Cesar Chavez Charter High School for Public Policy is one of the schools and is featured in this report) from a national grant competition to serve as model project schools. These model schools serve urban, suburban, and rural communities and reflect the demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity of communities across the U.S. Over the next several years, project schools will work to emphasize the First Amendment by providing their students with an apprenticeship in liberty and responsibility. According to Michael Wildasin, First Amendment Schools project director, while the individual schools may vary in how they choose to implement their vision of the First Amendment, they are united in their commitment to become laboratories of democratic freedom in which all students are given the opportunity to exercise their constitutional rights with responsibility. Project Schools are also united in their commitment to translate civic education into community engagement through service-learning and civic problem solving. Project Schools also commit to including all stakeholders in the educational process by encouraging parents, students, educators, and community members to work together to promote the First Amendment in their schools.

Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center believes that the Project is an important effort to reaffirm the civic mission of public education. He argues that if we are to prepare students for the challenges of active citizenship in our democracy, it is not sufficient to pass legislation about the Pledge of Allegiance or to require a certain number of civic education courses: schools must create a culture of democracy in which students have opportunities to learn the meaning of democracy, freedom, and responsibility through daily experiences.

Sheldon Berman, superintendent of Hudson Public Schools in Hudson, Massachusetts, where one of the First Amendment Project Schools is located, agrees. He explains that educating for democracy requires more than the transmission of discrete knowledge and skills; to teach the idea of democracy to youth, educators must convey to students that they are valued and contributing members of a community. Children must also have experiences of direct participation to find their voices and to develop a sense of social responsibility. Educators must create democratic communities in schools in which students

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can live the idea of democracy. For example, in the post-Columbine and September 11th world, many schools have increased the rigidity of their security procedures; his district, however, has moved in the opposite direction, working even harder than before to create caring and personal learning communities. Hudson has held forums with students to identify issues of common concern and to work on building a sense of community within the schools. They are currently trying to figure out how best to structure the schools to support the creation of community and to teach democracy. Berman emphasizes that the struggle to teach democracy in schools is not easy; it is complex, messy, and difficult; however, it is essential.

The Superintendent also addressed the pressures that the standards and accountability movement has placed on educators and how these pressures affect the capacity of educators to teach for democracy. He believes that schools are under an extraordinary amount of pressure; however, the public and educators must keep in mind that teaching for democracy and creating a culture that supports education for democratic citizenship are essential if we are to achieve high standards for all students. According to Berman, democratic schooling environments foster increased student engagement and motivation to learn.

Democratic schooling environments foster increased student engagement and motivation to learn

Extending Service to All Youth

In our forum, *Focus on the Future: A New Civic Institution for the New Century*, January 10, 2003, two leaders in national service, Shirley Sagawa, Sagawa/Jospin and Jim Kielsmeier, National Youth Leadership Council respond to their colleague from City Year, Alan Khazei's vision for national service in America and imagine the possibilities and benefits of extending the opportunity to participate in service to all youth.

What could the future of service-learning look like? How can we build upon the compassion and idealism that was released after September 11th? How might our society benefit if every American adult became civically engaged through service? Shirley Sagawa, author of *Common Interest, Common Good* and a leading advocate of service-learning, argues that service can promote positive youth development and help build stronger communities. She points to recent research presented by the National Academy of Sciences in a report entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Executive Summary available at http://www.nap.edu/execsumm/0309072751.html). Researchers have found that positive youth development is built upon about two dozen personal and social assets such as connectedness, feeling valued, a sense of personal responsibility, and feelings of personal efficacy.

Sagawa argues that all of these assets can be developed through high quality service programs; national and community service are important and cost-effective ways to help youth develop the assets they need to succeed as adults. As policymakers consider reauthorization of and appropriations for the National and Community Service Trust Act and other youth-related legislation, they should keep in mind the value of service-learning. Sagawa recommends that the opportunity to engage in service should be extended to all of our youth so that it becomes a common experience of every student in the United States. She believes that schools can make better use of out-of-school hours by extending the learning day through service activities, making a summer of service a right of passage for every eighth-grader, and providing every out-of-school youth with a positive transition to adulthood through service-related activities.

The opportunity to engage in service should be extended to all of our youth so that it becomes a common experience of every student in the United States.

Alan Khazei, chief executive officer of City Year, a leading national service organization that "seeks to demonstrate, improve and promote the concept of national service as a means for building a stronger democracy," also strongly believes in the power of youth service. Khazei's experience with youth service programs has led him to believe that service has the power to create engaged democratic citizens and to transform and improve our communities. His organization has established service programs for youth between the ages of 14 and 24 in communities across the United States. Youth participating in the program spend one year engaged in full-time, rigorous community service, leadership development, and civic engagement. Volunteers engage in a variety of service activities focused on the education and development of youth, mentoring children in public schools, and organizing and running after-school programs and curricula on important social issues such as domestic violence prevention, AIDS awareness, and diversity. The organization also engages citizens in service through large-scale community service events and promotes national service initiatives and policies. Khazei recommends that we expand existing service opportunities to build a system of national service in which all citizens can participate. To do this, we must simultaneously develop the key programs in which people serve and support the funding infrastructure that is needed to make those programs sustainable.

James Kielsmeier, president of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) is a long standing advocate of youth service. His organization, like Khazei's, engages in a wide variety of activities, each of which focuses on helping youth and adults engage in service-related learning and to acquire leadership skills. Kielsmeier emphasizes that service can make a positive contribution not only to youth development, but also to our nation. For instance, we need only think back to the Victory Gardens developed by ordinary citizens during World War II to see how people can step forward to help meet national needs. He believes that in the post-September 11th world, a window of opportunity has been opened. The question, he says, is whether we will step forward to seize this opportunity by expanding the opportunity to serve to all segments of our population, young and old alike.

Service has the power to create engaged democratic citizens and to transform and improve our communities

According to Kielsmeier, we are now at a tipping point: we need to take action to increase funding to support service programs, bring policymakers into direct contact with service providers, bolster pedagogical support for service learning, and pass a service bill introduced by the late Senator Wellstone, the Hubert Humphrey Civic Education Enhancement Act, which "promotes the engagement of young Americans in the democratic process through civic education in classrooms, in service-learning programs, and in student leadership activities in America's public schools."

Generation DotNet: A Civic and Political Portrait

Presenters from the forum *Generation DotNet: A Contrast in Civic and Political Behavior,* March 21, 2003 reported on a recent study of the political and civic attitudes and behaviors of youth aged 15-25 conducted by researchers from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at the University of Maryland. Panelists included Scott Keeter, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press; and Mark Hugo Lopez and Carrie Donovan, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

In September of 2002, a groundbreaking study of the nation's civic life was released by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Pew Charitable Trusts. The report, *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait,* is based on a comprehensive survey of Americans' civic and political behavior and takes the most in-depth look, to date, at the civic perspective and behavior of Generation DotNet (youth born after 1978), and chronicles the differences between the DotNet generation and other generations. According to Scott Keeter, associate director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and an author of the study, through their research, they hoped to gain a better understanding of recent trends in youth civic and political engagement, as well as to improve the way that we measure youth engagement. The data for the report were gathered over a two-year period through national surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

The findings indicate that the glass is either half empty or half full. Today's young people are increasingly disengaged from political life; on the other hand, they are participating in civic life. Altogether, however, over half of 15-25 year olds are disengaged from both forms of engagement. Fifteen percent of this age group is involved in electoral politics, 17 percent are involved in civic life, and 11 percent are involved in both modes of engagement. Thirty-seven percent of DotNets claim to follow politics most of the time (compared with 60 percent of Matures—those born before 1946 and 50 percent of Baby Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964). However, on many measures of civic engagement, young people are among the most active age group. For instance, the DotNets have the highest rates of volunteering; 40 percent have given time to a group in the past year, compared with 32 percent for Generation X (those born between 1964 and 1976) and Boomers, and 22 percent for Matures. DotNets also compare favorably with Xers and Boomers on measures of working together informally with someone or a group to solve a problem in the community where they live. For example, they are just as likely to have participated in a walk, run, or bicycle event for a charity group.

Today s young people are increasingly disengaged from political life; on the other hand, they are participating in civic life.

The CIRCLE study found other promising news: adult actions can and do have a significant impact on the degree of engagement of young people. Having good role models at home makes a big difference; young adults who often heard political talk while growing up are much more involved in a host of activities. Having volunteer models at home made a big difference in DotNets' civic and political engagement. There is also evidence that skills taught in schools support engagement; 80 percent of high school students have given an oral report, 51 percent have taken part in persuasive debate or discussion, and 38 percent have written a letter to someone they do not know, all activities associated with political engagement. Schools also encourage participation in group activity and this participation makes a difference in later engagement. Schools encourage or require students to engage in service activities; 75 percent of high school students say their

school arranges or requires service, and 21 percent of schools require it. The rate of volunteering is higher when schools involve students in service activities.

Youth are affected by more than families and schools; most DotNet volunteers are involved because someone else encouraged them, or they were recruited by a group. Being asked to volunteer, raise money for a charity, or participate in community problem-solving made a big difference in whether DotNets become involved; however, the DotNets are much less likely to be asked to work for or contribute to a political party or candidate than other generations.

Being asked to volunteer, raise money for a charity, or participate in community problem-solving made a difference in whether DotNets become involved.

The study also found that the DotNet generation is distinctive. They have a much stronger generational identity than other generations. They are more supportive of a larger role for government in regulation and social welfare, they have lower interpersonal trust, and greater acceptance of diversity. They are less likely than other generations to believe that good citizenship entails responsibility, however, their trust in government is generally high. And while more than half of this age group has an unfavorable view of mandatory youth service in high school, 81 percent would be interested in the chance to perform service while earning money toward college tuition.

CIRCLE's research also shows that rates of political participation and attitudes toward politics are linked to students' educational attainment and ethnic background; for instance, among 18-24 year olds, those with no college are less likely to turn out for elections. And while about half of white young adults think that they can make some or a little difference in their community, a smaller percentage of people of color believe this. To access the full report, visit CIRCLE's Web site at www.civicyouth.org.

Engaging Youth in Public Policymaking through Youth Cabinets and Youth Commissions

In the forum, *How Youth Become Effective Citizens: Models for Engaging Youth in Policy*, March 28, 2003, recent efforts in Missouri and San Francisco to engage youth and solicit their perspectives in the formation of public policies were described. Panelists included Ben Smilowitz and Justin Stephan, The Governor of Missouri's Youth Cabinet, Anthony Valdez, San Francisco Youth Commission; and Quentin Wilson, Missouri Department of Higher Education.

State and local governments have begun to explore ways to include the voice of young adults in the policymaking process. The Governor of Missouri's Youth Cabinet is a groundbreaking model for youth involvement that gives young adults the opportunity to become engaged in the public policymaking process at the state level. The Youth Cabinet began operation nine months ago; currently, it is composed of 45 members ranging in age from 17-22 years of age. Youth Cabinet members work with state department directors and function as senior public advisors. Nineteen of Missouri's state departments and three state task forces have received youth appointees.

According to Ben Smilowitz, coordinator of the Youth Cabinet, the goals of the program are to facilitate relationships and communication between the state government and young citizens. Through the program, policymakers are able to gain access to the perspectives of young people from diverse backgrounds. He and his colleagues have found that when young people feel that they are respected and when they are given the opportunity to make their voices heard, they respond positively and are interested in becoming involved. Youth interest in the program has been very high; over 350 applications from young people were received.

Voters in San Francisco recently approved a similar program for their city. The San Francisco Youth Commission, composed of 17 members, one appointed by each member of the Board of Supervisors and six appointed by the Mayor, advises the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor on issues related to children and youth. The Youth Commission plays a vital role in ensuring that youth have a voice in the decisions and policies that affect them. The Commission holds hearings with the Board and at City Hall to communicate youth perspectives to policymakers, and hosts town hall meetings in different districts across the city to hear and represent a diverse set of youth voices.

Anthony Valdez, former chair of the San Francisco Youth Commission in 2002 and a freshman at American University, described how members of the Youth Commission have been able to communicate with policymakers about important issues affecting youth. For instance, Tanene Allison, the current chair of the Youth Commission read that state legislation had created a boot camp for first time youth offenders of gun-related crimes and this program was being considered for adoption in San Francisco. She researched the boot camp and found that the program was so severe, it had physically endangered some young people. Alarmed about the program, she brought it to the attention of local legislators and the proposal to adopt the program in San Francisco was dropped.

The Youth Commission plays a vital role in ensuring that youth have a voice in the decisions and policies that affect them.

Youth and adults who have been involved in youth commission type initiatives say that the programs have been positive and have given youth a voice and experience in public policymaking. There are, however, certain challenges that programs must

address. One challenge has been to change the preconception that youth are apathetic about public policy issues. Valdez argues that many youth have an issue they are passionate about, but all too often, they feel they are not equipped with the means to communicate to decision makers. Justin Stephan, a Missouri Youth Cabinet member says that one challenge is to make sure that the adult policymakers and administrators who work with youth in these programs are willing and able to listen to and respect what youth have to say. Quentin Wilson, Commissioner of Higher Education in Missouri, believes that such programs should provide training for adults to help them communicate with young people and training for young people to build policy and leadership skills. An even greater challenge is funding. States cannot manage all of the expenses associated with such programs themselves and they have had to seek out partnerships in order to garner sufficient financial support. Additionally, because such initiatives are new, there are few established procedures or information about effective practices; making it necessary to develop rules and procedures along the way.

Programs should provide training for adults to help them communicate with young people and training for young people to build policy and leadership skills.

Youth Action for Educational Change

In the forum, *Youth Action for Educational Change*, May 17, 2002, panelists described efforts in New York and Philadelphia to engage and organize youth in the process of education reform and redesign. Panelists included Merita Irby, Forum for Youth Investment; Barbara Cervone, What Kids Can Do, Inc.; Oona Chaterjee, Make the Road by Walking; and Eric Braxton, Philadelphia Student Union.

Young people learn the most when they are engaged, emotionally and intellectually, in the world around them. It is rare, however, that youth are engaged in the decision making and power sharing in their schools. Yet there are some promising examples of how both youth and their communities benefit when students become involved in action to bring about improvements in their schools.

Eric Braxton is the director and founder of the Philadelphia Student Union (PSU), a student-run organization that he developed seven years ago at Simon Gratz High School in response to student complaints about inadequate textbooks and dirty bathrooms. PSU has now become a citywide student organizing effort that has successfully brought about changes in curriculum, staffing, and the basic physical infrastructure of Philadelphia's public schools. Many concrete changes have resulted from PSU's student activism. For instance, at Gratz High School, harassment and abuse of students from school security officers was a big issue. Student advocacy led to the appointment of a student ombudsman in the school to protect the rights of students. Young people now have a voice in talking about school policy and the climate of the school is changing. On the district level, Philadelphia students met to create a student platform on planned school reforms citing student concerns and laying out a long-term vision regarding every issue in the city's reform plan. Four hundred students from 27 Philadelphia schools ratified the platform. Students also demanded to be involved in the debate about privatization of public schools. They staged a candlelight vigil at a school board meeting to delay a vote and 2500 students staged a rally in City Hall. As a result, no Philadelphia high school will be privatized.

Student advocacy led to the appointment of a student ombudsman in the school to protect the rights of students.

Oona Chaterjee is co-founder of Make the Road by Walking, a membership-led community organization in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, a low-income predominately immigrant community. The Youth Power Project, operated under the auspices of Make the Road by Walking, began two years ago with fewer than ten youth either already out-of-school or at risk for school failure. The youth organized several activities such as petitioning the mayor for more funding for after-school programs and providing training to police officers on how to work with truant youth in the community. Representatives of the Youth Power Project feel that their work has created definite improvements such as a qualitative change in police attitudes toward truant youth. The Project now involves a group of about thirty 13-15 year olds who meet regularly and seven adult staff members who assist them. Participants have improved their self-confidence and developed the ability to organize themselves and other youth to improve their schools and the treatment of youth in the community.

Students in the San Francisco area have also been involved in activism related to their education. Barbara Cervone, executive director of What Kids Can Do, a national organization that combs the country for compelling examples of young people working with adults in their schools and communities on real-world issues that concern them, describes some examples of youth action that recently appeared in a report entitled "Taking Democracy in Hand: Youth Action for Educational Change in the San Francisco Bay Area." This

study found over 40 youth/adult partnerships involving educational change. These partnerships created real and meaningful change in the community. For example, the Kids First Coalition organized young people and adults to demand additional funds for youth services resulting in an increase in youth program funding from $200,000 per year to $6 million and the creation of an oversight panel whose membership is 50 percent young people.

Cervone has found that both youth and adults bring something beneficial to such partnerships. Youth bring fresh ideas that challenge existing systems. Adults bring experience and information that youth might not be able to access by themselves. Youth/adult partnerships for educational change help to bridge income, geographic, and racial differences that might otherwise divide communities.

Youth action is about young people wanting to be full-fledged citizens, wanting to take democracy into their own hands, and finding their power and using it well to acquire new skills.

Cervone emphasizes that youth action is about young people wanting to be full-fledged citizens, wanting to take democracy into their own hands, and finding their power and using it well to acquire new skills. She warns that some school reformers may unintentionally create barriers to youth involvement by 1) having only token positions for youth on school design committees, 2) not providing youth with the same information as adults, and 3) not seeing youth as a potential partner in school reform.

Students Changing the Course of Public Policy

In the AYPF field trip to *Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Pubic Policy* in Washington, D.C., April 29, 2003, participants got a snapshot of the groundbreaking charter school that focuses on public policy and had the opportunity to hear students, teachers, and administrators discuss the powerful impact that the school is having on youth engagement. Presenters during the field trip included Irasema Salcido, Cesar Chavez Pubic Charter High School for Public Policy; Charles Haynes, First Amendment Center; Peter Levine, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

Twenty years ago, Principal Irasema Salcido had a vision of a school that would serve underprivileged youth and educate them to become effective change agents capable of improving their own communities. She examined existing college programs in public policy and developed a plan for a high school that would prepare students for higher education and leadership roles in public policy. Salcido joined with other educators who shared her vision and together they worked to realize the vision that has become Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy.

Chavez is a unique charter school that prepares high school students from the District of Columbia to become active citizens dedicated to influencing the public policies that affect their communities. Since it opened in 1998, the school has served students from all over the District; the current student population is 51 percent Hispanic, 45 percent African American, 1 percent Asian, and 2 percent other. Seventy-six percent of Chavez students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program that serves students from low-income families. The school currently serves 250 students in small classroom settings. Chavez is characterized by its focus on serving a diverse population, high academic standards, a small and supportive learning environment, and public policy.

Throughout the year, a full-time public policy director at the school works with faculty and staff to weave public policy themes into the curriculum and to help students learn how policy is shaped and how citizens can have a profound influence on the policies that affect their communities. Chavez has a School Advisory Board of prominent leaders of the District's public policy community. The board helped to create a formalized public policy curriculum to support the goals of the school's public policy program.

The public policy focus begins in the 9th grade. Teachers work with students to develop a foundation for future policy involvement and attempt to encourage a sense of empowerment, leadership, efficacy and commitment to social change. Students begin to learn about key contemporary policy issues, social justice leaders, social movements, and relationships in the policymaking process. The 9th grade curriculum focuses on developing students' understandings of major policy issue areas such as education, health, housing, environment, crime/violence, poverty; defining "public policy" and related terms; highlighting historical leaders and movements that have shaped public policy; and explaining the development of public policy.

In the 10th grade, students participate in a Community Action Project. The goal of this project is to teach students the tools and skills they will need if they are to influence the policies that affect their communities. For instance, during 2001-2002, students produced a public service announcement against gun violence, held meetings and community forums with the District of Columbia Metro Board advocating improved bus service in low income areas, and worked to organize a community fair for youth on using bicycles as sustainable transportation. At this grade level, the focus is on developing students' understanding of the role of government and policy organizations in creating and shaping policy, acquiring the tools to affect public policy; and developing research, writing and public speaking skills.

In the 11th grade, an emphasis is placed on devel-

oping students' understanding of a particular policy issue that is of interest to them and further fostering their policy related skills. Students engage in a full-time, three-week, intensive, academic fellowship within a public policy organization. At the placement site, students work on a specific public policy project, honing their research skills. In addition to further exposure to the field of public policy, students learn important professional skills including resume writing, interviewing, Power Point presentation software, dressing for success, time management, and phone etiquette.

Over the past three years, students have worked with over 60 different policy organizations including the White House Office of the Vice President, Leadership Committee on Civil Rights, Heritage Foundation, Urban Institute, Sierra Club, DC Action for Children, Washington Peace Center, United Students Against Sweatshop Labor, DC Agenda, Center for Education Reform, Institute for Policy Studies, and the Senate Democratic Policy Committee.

In their senior year, students write a 15-page public policy research paper and continue to develop public policy and leadership skills. Each student works closely with a Chavez faculty advisor and, in some cases, an outside expert to assist with the research topic. At the end of the school year, students present their thesis to a panel of public policy professionals. Compelling topics include execution of the mentally retarded, homelessness, immigrant rights, cloning technology, and secondhand smoke.

Students, faculty and community leaders work collaboratively on intense, interdisciplinary projects focused on public policy.

In June, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders participate in a special capstone program to further develop their writing, analytical thinking, and public speaking skills, as well as their understanding of specific public policy issues. Students, faculty and community leaders work collaboratively on intense, interdisciplinary projects focused on public policy. In 2001-2002, for example, 10th grade students asked the City Council to release surplus District of Columbia pubic school buildings for charter school use. Students wrote a press release and held a press conference to urge public officials to release surplus buildings. They also conducted in-depth research on issues related to food and politics, including access to food in low-income neighborhoods, marketing practices of the fast food industry, and the promotion of organic local food markets.

The school offers additional public policy activities and programs for students throughout the school year. For instance, in 2001-2002, 10th grade students lobbied Congress to support HR 2966, the Cesar Estrada Chavez Study Act to create historic sites in honor of Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers Movement. Juniors spent a day shadowing university students and faculty at the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute. Fifteen students went on a learning laboratory boat trip with the Student Conservation Association to research the Anacostia River and its surrounding environment. Students tested water samples and explored habitats and plant life in the area.

According to Peter Levine, deputy director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and author of the recent report *The Civic Mission of Schools*, the Chavez Charter School is a successful experiment in education for democracy; the educational program that it provides students supports the civic mission of public schools. Specifically, the school incorporates a wide variety of pedagogical experiences for students, which experts in civic education believe are necessary if students are to be prepared for informed and active citizenship. Chavez Charter School 1) provides instruction in government, history, law and democracy; 2) incorporates discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their

lives; 3) designs and implements programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction (a.k.a. service-learning); 4) offers extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools and communities; 5) encourages student participation in school governance; and 6) encourages students' participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures (from *The Civic Mission of Schools,* 2003, CIRCLE and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. See www.civicyouth.org for the full report).

Chavez students attest to the positive impact of the school as well. For example, Cherry, a 12th grader at Chavez, struggled through her early years of schooling. Nevertheless, she was accepted by Chavez as a 9th grader. In her first three years at the school, Cherry continued to struggle. However, in the 11th grade she realized that her future would depend on how well she did in school. She and a group of students worked closely with a group of Chavez teachers, receiving extra tutoring and support. Through this extra support she was able to increase her grade point average dramatically. While at Chavez, Cherry has developed an interest in child development and issues related to children's rights; she recently wrote her senior thesis on issues related to child abuse and now plans to attend the University of Maryland next year. Cherry says she would not have made it through school without the support provided by the Chavez school community. Other Chavez graduates have gone on to become successful and engaged young adults as well. The average daily attendance rate is close to ninety percent. According to Salcido, Chavez students are successful as measured by traditional standards; 11th graders at the school outperformed other District of Columbia students on all 16 math and reading content clusters of the 2001-2002 Stanford 9 exam. The college acceptance rate of the first graduating class was one hundred percent with students going on to attend American University, Brown University, Howard University and other institutes of higher education.

The Power of Youth Court to Build an Effective Citizenry

During a field trip entitled *The Power of Youth Court: Cultivating a Culture of Community and Citizenship*, February 20-21, 2003, participants learned about a youth-led crime intervention and prevention program that seeks to positively influence youth by increasing awareness of delinquency issues and by mobilizing youth to take an active role in addressing youth delinquency at an early stage. For more information on the many speakers involved, see the contacts listing in the back of this publication.

The Youth Court system fosters the growth of an effective youth citizenry by allowing youth to be accountable to their peers. Research has shown that Youth Court reduces the number of young offenders in a community, introduces an educational and engaging experience for youth, and provides an opportunity for youth to learn and serve in important civic positions such as attorney, clerk, bailiff, and juror. Strictly a voluntary program for youth and adults alike, Youth Court combines service-learning and community service to empower youth to bring their peers back in line as all youth involved gain experience in the judicial process. Both court-based and school-based versions of Youth Court were observed during the visit to Palm Beach and Broward Counties.

Youth Court combines service-learning and community service to empower youth to bring their peers back in line as all youth involved gain experience in the judicial process.

Court-Based Youth Court

In Palm Beach County, Wilma Roy, manager of the County's Youth Court program at the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), located in West Palm Beach and near Jupiter, Florida, said the program processed 5,000 cases last year with defendants completing approximately 16,000 hours of community service, 600 jury duties, and thousands of dollars in restitution to victims. The Palm Beach Youth Court's objectives to increase school and community safety include: 1) providing a comprehensive program that will hold youth accountable for their actions, 2) educating youth to accept responsibility for their actions, 3) reinforcing responsible and productive behavior through role models in the community, 4) educating participants in the judicial process, 5) introducing career opportunities and life skill development, and 6) preventing future delinquent behavior.

Youth participants gave their perspective of the program. Darren, a high school senior, explained that the program allowed him to learn more about court proceedings through the roles of juror, prosecutor and defender for his "clients." Inspired by his experience and training in Youth Court, he intends to pursue a law degree. Erica, a junior, shared her experience as a youth defendant. In her court experience, sanctions assigned included a letter of apology, a short report, and service in a local animal shelter. She said the process was positive and educational and described other volunteer opportunities made available to defendants, such as working in local parks and in community-based organizations. Erica concluded by communicating the flexibility of the program and its attentiveness to the interests of young offenders saying, "You have a choice." Since both the arbitration process and Youth Court process are voluntary, the defendant has a choice to not accept the sentence and instead hire a lawyer, and proceed through the traditional juvenile court system, a cost that will set the family back three-to-seven thousand dollars.

In 1997, the Youth Court program expanded to include mediation through the Palm Beach County District School Police Department. As a result, the County has two distinct diversion pro-

grams: the Teen Arbitration Panel and the Youth Court Trial Program. The AYPF visiting team observed both programs.

The Youth Court Trial Program in Palm Beach consists of a case trial processed in a district courtroom overseen by an adult judge volunteer, tried by youth attorneys and sentenced by youth jurors. The Teen Arbitration Panel is conducted in a hearing room overseen by a Juvenile First Offender Officer in coordination with the Palm Beach School District Police. Cases for the Teen Arbitration Panel are referred by the schools. The officer overseeing the process contacts parents, conducts pretrial interviews, prepares the appropriate case trial paperwork, coordinates the trial, ensures that court procedures operate smoothly, and is authorized to assume all roles of law enforcement in order to process the trial. The officer also conducts a follow-up interview with the youth offender to monitor completion of trial ordered sanctions. The role for youth volunteers in the Teen Arbitration Panel is to review the case, and under adult supervision, meet at the trial with the offender, question the offender and then provide suggested sanctions. Youth volunteers for the arbitration panel are usually youth who have been processed through the arbitration system. The youth met during our visit were pleased with the process, enjoyed being of service to their peers, and explained that they intend to stay involved and grow with the program. "It [Youth Court] helped me build a sense of responsibility and gave me a something to do after school," said one youth.

Youth who serve as attorneys are provided with training to make them knowledgeable with the courtroom process and courtroom presentation skills to aptly prosecute a peer defendant or defend their peer client. Teens are coached on speech and appearance, proper delivery of an opening statement to the court and how to proceed with direct examination, cross examination, redirecting the defendant, objecting to objectionable questions, preparing a closing statement, and more. When delivering an opening statement, youth are encouraged to tell just enough of the story to retain the jury's attention, arrange the statement in a logical, easy to follow order, speak sincerely and honestly, introduce themselves and state who they represent—either the defendant or the State of Florida, only introduce information that will be proven in the questioning, explain the charge and any technicalities that the jury needs to know, speak confidently and firmly, and speak to the jury in understandable terms.

Teen Arbitration Panel Case

In a Palm Beach County court hearing room, a female youth defendant was accompanied by her father to sit before Officer John Pruitt and two youth volunteers serving as the arbitration panel. The youth was questioned and asked to describe her case. She was arrested in her boyfriend's car and found to be in possession of a small amount of marijuana and a tablet of Xanex, a prescription drug. The defendant admitted to smoking the marijuana "a little at the time, but not now." The arrest was two weeks earlier and the officer told the defendant that he would need to know if she was still smoking. She then admitted to smoking after arrest. "It concerns me why someone who goes through being arrested would smoke again," said the officer. The defendant said she did not know she was sitting on top of the prescription drug in her boyfriend's car. The youth on the panel told her they were in her position two months earlier, asked a few more questions and then presented a list of sanctions. The defendant was sentenced to perform 55 hours of community service at the court house (the average length is 50-100 hours), write a two-page paper on the harmful effects of marijuana, write an apology letter to her parents, and serve on three Youth Court juries. The defendant and her parent signed a contract citing the sanctions, agreeing to comply.

Youth Court Case

Two 12-year-old defendants were charged with breaking five fire extinguishers in a parking garage and obstructing the extinguishing of a

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possible fire. Both youth came to trial already suffering from a parental punishment of grounding. The youth State prosecutor said the crime took place at a popular parking garage where many cars are present. Prosecutors argued that the defendants discharged not one, but five extinguishers, not only wasting a resource of the garage, but possibly endangering the lives of others by depriving them of the use of the extinguishers. The extinguishers were used to propel the defendants as they rode on their skateboards throughout the garage. The jury listened to both sides and was sent to deliberate. A volunteer attorney worked with youth attorneys to provide constructive criticism on their performance and then assisted the jury, helping them decide on the verdict and deliberation over appropriate sanctions. Suggested sanctions included 40 hours of community service to be served with burn victims in the community, payment for the five extinguishers, a letter of apology to parents and the owners of the parking garage, and four jury duty sessions. The presiding judge, a volunteer, gave the youth a few final words of advice saying that they should stay out of trouble and work diligently to gain back the trust of their parents.

Detective Eric Frank of the Jupiter Police Department is on the front line of Youth Court. After arrest and through his referral, first-time offenders of non-violent misdemeanors are introduced to Youth Court from the Jupiter Police Department and can choose to plead guilty to their crime and sign a contract to proceed through the Youth Court system. Youth consult with their parents or guardian and make their choice. In choosing this route, youth will avoid a public record of their mishap. They may also be referred by the State Attorney's office, however this route will not avoid the filing of a record, but youth will enjoy the other benefits found through the adjudication process. Officers who refer cases to Youth Court assess the offender's attitude, evidence of a prior record (some Youth/Teen Courts will work with a second time offender of a minor violation), and seriousness of the crime. They will speak with the victim, the youth's family and the youth to inform their referral. Youth who enter the program have their charges waived for 90 days as they go through the process. When youth complete the program, their charges are dismissed. If youth are arrested during the time they are participating in the process, their contract is terminated. According to Detective Frank and Manager of the Youth Court program, Wilma Roy, of all cases processed through the Palm Beach County Youth Court system in 2002, only one youth was re-arrested. Electing to be tried through the Youth Court process allows teens to keep their records clean, diverts them from the juvenile justice system, and frees the Court system to deal with more serious and violent offenders.

Palm Beach County School District Chief of Police James P. Kelly started the program in 1978 at the district court with assistance from "a good crew of Circuit Court judges and magistrates." Chief Kelly began the program by posting officers in schools to be close to youth to keep potential problems from getting out of hand, using prevention as a primary and long-term focus. "We all talk about community policing, but there is not always time to do this," said Kelly. "We wanted to do something that showed youth an immediate effect and looked to Sarasota's Youth Court model for guidance and expanded as needs developed." The Palm Beach model started small, said Kelly, keeping the mistakes small and easy to correct as the system grew. The county is large and diverse with 37 municipalities under their jurisdiction. Law enforcement professionals volunteer their time from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to process Youth Court cases. Other volunteers include traffic magistrates, private attorneys, and Assistant State Attorneys. Judges preside over cases assisting youth in their roles as prosecutor, defender, defendant and jury. Chief Kelly admits to enjoying seeing young people "learning in so many ways. They can't 'snow' their peers like they can adults." The county receives some funding based on Florida legislation that sends three dollars from

every speeding ticket to Youth Court programs across the state.

According to an evaluation report provided by the Department of Family, Youth and Community Services, University of Florida, between 1995 and 2001, approximately 255 adult and student volunteers contributed their time to the Palm Beach County Youth Court system. During the six-year period, the total number of cases processed yearly increased from 301 to 3,127 cases. Today, that number has grown to over 5,000 cases per year diverted from juvenile court to Youth Court. The evaluation reports, "The success rate of the program attests to the impact on youth and the community." The most frequent Youth Court cases in Palm Beach County, in order of occurrence, involve crimes committed by youth 14-17 in retail theft, possession of marijuana, battery, possession of alcohol by a minor, possession of drug paraphernalia, and petty theft. The five most popular types of sanctions used by the Palm Beach Youth Court include community service, essay, apology letter, jail tour, and referral program. Between 1995 and 2001, youth offenders paid over $18,000 of restitution to victims.

State Attorney Barry Krishcher is a staunch supporter of the Youth Court program and feels that the only way to impact adult crime is to impact juvenile crime. Crime is dealt with severely in Florida and youth 16-17 years old can be tried as adults once they have three felony convictions. Those who have committed crimes such as a violent felony or home invasion will go straight to adult court, including youth as young as 13 years of age. Two percent of children in the state are tried in adult court. This strict view on crime makes a program like Youth Court all the more important to reach youth before they get involved in the juvenile justice system and indoctrinated into more serious criminal misadventures. Crimes that may not be handled by Youth Court include: aggravated battery or assault, arson, bomb threat, burglary, distribution of drugs, domestic violence, possession of firearm or weapon with intent to use, possession of drugs with intent to sell/distribute, resisting arrest with violence, strong arm robbery, sex offences, and tampering with a witness. Krishcher says there is a positive partnership between his office, the school district and the Juvenile Assessment Center where the district's Youth Court system is managed.

Tracy Godwin Mullins, director of the National Youth Court Center provided an overview of Youth/Teen Courts across the nation. Godwin Mullins describes the program as one in which youth are sentenced by their peers, youth involved are between the ages of 11 and 17 years-of-age, and youth volunteers are between 13 and 18 years-of-age. Youth Courts are appealing because they serve as a prevention and early intervention program, offer a way to hold juvenile offenders accountable, provide a means for educating youth on the legal and judicial system, provide a meaningful forum for youth to build competencies, offer an avenue for youth to provide service, build ties to the community, and foster youth empowerment. Youth Court programs cost an average of $30,000 per year to operate, a low cost supported by the extensive use of volunteers.

There are three general types of Youth Court models with variations of hybrid models throughout the nation. The Adult Judge Model is used in 56 percent of programs nationwide. In this model, youth volunteers serve in the roles of defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, and jurors, while the adult volunteer, either an attorney or judge, serves in the role of judge. The Youth Judge Model allows youth volunteers to serve in the role of judge, attorney, clerk, bailiff, and juror. There is an adult in the room, usually an attorney, to monitor and mentor youth. The Youth Tribunal Model is similar but there is no peer jury. Finally, the Peer Jury Model has an adult or youth volunteer serving in the role of judge, youth volunteers serve as jurors and question the defendant directly, and sometimes youth advocates are involved. Youth Courts are sometimes called Teen Courts or Peer Jury and can be run in a juvenile justice system based in courts, schools, law enforcement agencies, juvenile probation depart-

ments, or community-based organizations. It can be either self-contained, or involve partners in the community.

A national evaluation released in 2002, conducted by the Urban Institute and funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, suggested that "teen court may be a viable alternative to the typical justice process ... especially in jurisdictions that are unable to provide extensive interventions for young, first-time juvenile offenders." It went on to suggest that "teen courts may be a cost effective option since they depend largely on volunteers and have small operating budgets. The Urban Institute's evaluation reported that:

- Recidivism is low among teen court cases partly due to factors existing before teen court.
- Teen court may be a viable option for cases not likely to receive meaningful sanctions from the juvenile justice system.
- Client satisfaction is very high among youth and parents, even after teen court sanctioning.
- No clear evidence suggests that one courtroom model is best, but youth-run models deserve wider consideration.

Recommendations from the report include:

1. Examine community data for trends in offenses by gender, age and race of offender as well as the town that they are from and specifically where they committed their offense.
2. Examine times of arrest and frequency for details and trends on crime frequency patterns.
3. Explore why the number of offense types has declined.
4. Explore recidivism data in relation to crime type and sanctions used.
5. Examine risk factors for youth, particularly those participating in high severity level crimes.

(For more information on the evaluation, please visit www.youthcourt.net/.)

The National Youth Court Center serves as an information clearinghouse, provides training and technical assistance through conferences, regional training seminars, onsite technical assistance, and workshops, and serves as an informational clearinghouse for new and established Youth/Teen Court programs. The Center also provides resources to allied agencies that support Youth Court programs, including the American Bar Association and Street Law, Inc.

SCHOOL-BASED YOUTH COURT

Broward County School Board Vice Chair Carol Andrews is a champion for the youth program. In looking at Teen and Youth Court progress across the state, she became impressed by the low recidivism level. There are school resource officers in every school in the county to watch over the safety of 260,000 students, says Andrews, but bringing a Youth Court system into the schools would "be a good addition because this is where the students first start to socialize and begin to create minor misdemeanors."

Eva McLeod is an Olsen Middle School teacher and peer counselor who trains students to be mentors/counselors for the school's Teen Court program, a year-long elective course for 7th and 8th graders. "Teen court and peer counseling go hand in hand," says McLeod. Students are recommended to her for the Teen Court program and must have a "C" average and interest in exploring the law. Student mentors work with peer defendants and are trained on court procedures. Teen Court clients are referred by school administrators.

The AYPF team visited Olsen Middle School to see Teen Court in session. The Teen Court serves as a student discipline board that determines consequences for offenses that happen on school grounds such as: skipping school or class, misbehavior, vandalism, forgery, cheating, profanity, theft, horseplay, and others. School administrators and guidance counselors can recommend if a stu-

dent should participate in the Teen Court. The Court consists of a student judge, two defense lawyers, two prosecution lawyers, a bailiff, a clerk of the court, a jury foreman and 5-9 jurors. Cases that are processed are binding and students who are adjudicated in the process agree to accept sanctions submitted. Sanctions given to defendants may include any or a combination of the following: detention; peer counseling during lunch; peer tutoring during lunch; service hours to be completed with parental monitoring; learning packets which consist of activity sheets on anger-management, decision-making skills, bullying, building confidence and others to be completed at home with a parent; written letter of apology; and monetary fine when applicable.

The peer counseling program has been at Olsen Middle School for two and a half years and handles 15 to 20 cases each year. It is about to expand with help from local law school students. Students are now gearing up to present a case in front of a judge and attorneys in a competition with other schools. Peer counselors experience a semester of training on counseling, mediation, teen court, and mock court. Issues not handled by the counselors include drugs, weapons, and fighting. They do handle issues involving disruptive behavior, tardiness, and conflicts between students. Parents are contacted and given suggestions on what avenues the student can choose to fix the problem and are allowed to come in and meet with peer counselors. Peer counselors are also available for math, science, and test preparation.

Teen Court Case Observed

The case was held in the school library. The jury was called in and took an oath of confidentiality. Two defendants, 12- and 13-years old, were charged with cheating on the state exam. The jury was asked if they recognized the defendants and were then sworn in. The jury was told that both defendants' parents had grounded them with no phone or computer privilege since the incident.

An opening statement came from the prosecutor who said the two offenders should receive severe punishment for their foolish and unworthy actions, and such disrespectfulness should not be tolerated. The defense told the jury that the defendants are good students with 3.64 and 2.6 grade point averages, respectively. They were only looking at planning sheets for the test, not specifically cheating, they are already being punished by their parents, and they are under severe pressure from their parents and peers to pass the test. The bailiff swore in the defendants before their testimony.

Defendant 1: We exchanged planning sheets so she could read and that's all we did.

Prosecutor: Do you consider yourself a responsible student? What did the teacher say before tests were passed out? Why would you exchange planning sheets? What was going through your mind? Did you give each other advice on answers?

Defendants 1 & 2: No.

Jury posited questions: How did you feel before you got caught?

Defendant 2: I was scared and hoped we wouldn't get caught.

Jury: Did you consider preparing for the test?

Defendants: Yes.

Jury: Even if you weren't "cheating," just exchanging planning sheets, do you think the teacher would think you were cheating?

Defendants: Yes.

Jury: Was the switching of papers a premeditated plan?

Defendants: No.

Jury: Do you know the consequences of cheating on the FCAT [Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test]?

Defendants: No.

Jury: What made you cheat on the test?

Defendant 2: Because it is a Florida state test and I wasn't going to pass. [I knew] it would be really hard.

Jury: If you were both having problems on the test, why would you cheat off each other?

Defendants: We were scared. We are really sorry about this and will accept punishment.

Closing statement from the Defense: They did not write or talk. All they did was exchange planning sheets, not the test. Remember the pressure that is put on you. They realize what they did was wrong and [because of their actions] their test won't count which will hurt them academically.

Closing statement from the Prosecutor: The word "cheat" means to break the rule and gain an advantage. They have admitted guilt in cheating. Not cheating shows a level of respect and respect has been broken.

Judge: Jury is to deliberate and fill out the verdict form.

Jury retires to deliberate and then returns with a verdict: The students will write an apology to their parents under the guidance of the Language Arts teacher. The apology will be in the form of a report that discusses cheating and it will be due on March 19, 2003.

Students in the school's peer counseling program spent half a day in their Teen Court class preparing for the case, reviewing the roles of defense and prosecution, writing down and discussing questions to be asked, and preparing defendants for questioning. Their teacher Eva McLeod is developing a code of conduct book, but until it is ready, the students are using the school code of conduct book as a guide. Students reported that they enjoy the experience and say it gives them a chance to understand what a court system is like. Other skills reported by students include becoming a better listener, learning to follow-up with what must be done for a case, and greater compassion for their peers.

Recommendations on Practices and Policies

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) released a report in 2003 entitled *The Civic Mission of Schools* (available on www.civicyouth.org) that provides guidance for adults aiming to help youth acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. The report suggests that competent and responsible citizens are 1) informed and thoughtful, 2) participate in their communities, 3) act politically, and 4) have moral and civic virtues. Through AYPF's series of forums and field trips exploring research, policy and practice around building an effective citizenry, we have collected a list of recommendations and guidance that will further inform policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Suggested practices and policies to promote the development of effective and engaged young citizens follow.

1. Listen to the voices of youth, value their input and give them the tools to support their engagement.

- Provide genuine and meaningful opportunities to make youth voices heard in the decisions and policies that affect them, allowing them to have an impact on social issues that concern them. Youth must have experiences of direct participation to find their voices and to develop a sense of social responsibility.
- Respect and recognize the value of the experience and knowledge that youth can bring to public problem solving.
- Support all youth, including those with disabilities, in their attempts to take control of their own lives and to become their own advocates. To achieve this goal, youth need access to information centers that are operated by and for youth.
- Increase the quality and quantity of activities in schools that support engagement skills including oral reports, persuasive debate, discussion, and group service activities.
- Assure that policymakers and administrators who work with youth are willing and able to listen to and respect what youth have to say. Programs that bring adults and youth to work together should provide training for adults to help them communicate with young people and training for young people to build policy and leadership skills.
- Adults must avoid making generalizations about youth apathy and realize that many youth care deeply about public issues and are interested in becoming involved in addressing society's issues. Developing trusting relationships between young people and adults does not happen overnight; but with sustained engagement and guidance, adults can work with youth to build an effective citizenry.
- Recognize that adult actions can and do have a significant impact on the degree of engagement of young people. Having positive and active role models at home makes a big difference in the civic engagement of young people. Efforts should be made to educate and expand the number of positive and civically engaged adults who can interact beneficially with young people.

2. Make service an expected and common experience for all young people.

- Provide an opportunity for all youth to engage in service so that it becomes a common experience of every citizen in the United States. Service activities have the power to create engaged democratic citizens and to transform and improve communities.
- Encourage all youth to volunteer, or become involved in a service or service-learning experience. Youth volunteers are often involved because someone encouraged them, or they were recruited by a group.

- For in-school youth, make better use of out-of-school hours by extending the learning day through service activities and making a summer of service a right of passage for every eighth-grader. Provide opportunities for out-of-school youth to experience positive transitions to adulthood through service-related activities.

- Bring policymakers into direct contact with service providers to see programs in action and understand the value of service activities.

- Support provisions introduced by the late Senator Wellstone in his bill, the Hubert Humphrey Civic Education Enhancement Act, which "promotes the engagement of young Americans in the democratic process through civic education in classrooms, in service-learning programs, and in student leadership activities in America's public schools."

3. Expand the number of schools and community programs in America that support youth civic engagement and service and civics instruction.

- Expand existing service opportunities to enrich the nation's network of national service. To do this, simultaneously encourage the development of the model programs and fuel the funding infrastructure needed to make those programs sustainable.

- Support national, state and district legislation to make service-learning a common experience for all young people. For example, increase funding for the Learn and Serve America program, under the Corporation for National and Community Service, that focuses on service-learning.

- Expand the number of Youth Court programs, which use a combination of service-learning and community service to engage youth in an important civic exercise.

  - Youth Court allows students to be accountable to their peers, recognize their impact on the community, and become knowledgeable in the civic duties of a juror, and responsibilities of attorneys and officers of the court.

  - Placing school resource officers in school to watch over the safety of students is a popular idea in school districts, but bringing a Youth Court program into the schools would be a good addition because this is where the students first start to socialize and begin to commit minor misdemeanors.

  - Teen court [Youth Court] and peer counseling go hand in hand and should be used together when possible.

- Investigate and support new and creative ways to incorporate service within education reform and youth development efforts.

- Highlight national and state models of youth civic engagement for use in schools and community programs. Because many initiatives in the area of youth civic engagement are new, there are few established procedures and little information about effective practices.

- Establish partnerships among corporate and foundation partners and states, districts, and local communities to help manage the expenses associated with service and youth engagement programs.

- Bring existing, successful service programs that aim to build an effective youth citizenry or local youth engagement to scale and provide guidance on scaling up. Insufficient planning and flexibility in the development of a program can lead to failed policy efforts and frustrated practitioners, policymakers, and youth. When trying to expand a program to the national level, program directors should consider how the program accommodates local variation, the type of institutional infrastructure that is necessary to house the various programmatic components and

organizational partners, and the speed of expansion—slow, rapid, or as needed. Also, consider the following:

- Standardize the program and make sure it is well-structured to attract others;
- Prepare the program so that it is easy to promote and market,
- Make sure it is financially viable and sustainable,
- Provide or identify funding that interested parties can plug into.

4. Promote a more supportive cultural environment for teaching democracy.

- Create democratic communities in schools in which students can live the idea of democracy. This is even more critical in the post-Columbine and September 11th world where many schools have increased the rigidity of their security procedures. With this added stress on relationships among citizens, it is important to create caring and personal learning communities.
- Teach the idea of democracy to children and youth. Educators must convey to students that they are valued and contributing members of a community. Educating for democracy requires more than the transmission of discrete knowledge and skills.
- Recognize that the struggle to teach democracy in schools is not easy; it is complex, messy, and difficult, yet essential. Progress will not always be immediate or obvious. Addressing the problems that arise in the process will require hard work, a sustained commitment to working through the problems, and a willingness to listen and learn from others whose experiences may be very different from their own.

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ISBN: 1-887031-80-4

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